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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 001118

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [TO](#) [IV](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: TOGO/France: EX-MINISTER BOKO UPSET AND AFRAID
AFTER PRESS LEAKS ON TOGO-COTE D'IVOIRE ARMS TRAFFICKING
ISSUES

REF: A. PARIS 741
[1](#)B. PARIS 553
[1](#)C. 05 PARIS 4103

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Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Togo's ex-Interior Minister Francois Boko said on February 17 that he was very upset by apparent press leaks concerning his testimony about the November 6, 2004, bombing incident in Cote d'Ivoire. Boko had told a French judge investigating the incident that French authorities had neglected to act on intelligence from Togo both before and after the bombing. After the public exposure of Boko's testimony, he said he feared for his and his family's safety through Togolese reprisals. Separately, Boko sought U.S. support for his candidacy for a position at the African Development Bank (see Guidance Request, para 9). Boko deemed his February 4 meeting with the Togolese diaspora a success and noted that he was considering meeting with Gilchrist Olympio to see if their political agendas could be reconciled in an effort to promote unity among Togo's opposition. Boko remained convinced that President Faure was going to govern Togo much like his father Eyadema had, and provided a chilling anecdote supporting this conclusion. END SUMMARY.

INCENSED AND AFRAID

[1](#)2. (C) Togo's former Interior Minister Francois Boko has previously described to us the arms trafficking link between Togo and Cote d'Ivoire, and how French ex-gendarme and Togo insider Robert Montoya helped provide Cote d'Ivoire weapons and Belarusian military personnel involved in the November 6, 2004, bombing in Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire, that led to the deaths of nine French soldiers and an Amcit civilian (Ref A). Boko has also reported that he had informed the French of these links and had directed the arrests of eight Belarusians after the bombing (including the two pilots directly involved) when they attempted to transit through Togo after the bombings. He said that the French told him to release the pilots after he had held them in custody for two weeks, on the grounds that France did not want to cause problems with Belarus over the incident.

[1](#)3. (C) Boko was late to our February 17 meeting because he had called earlier that day on French judge Brigitte Raynaud, who is investigating the bombing and the related Togo-Cote d'Ivoire arms trafficking issue. Raynaud had officially interviewed Boko on February 9, at which time Boko provided Raynaud with the same information on the bombing, the arms trafficking link, Montoya's role, and the GOF suggestion to release the Belarusians that he had earlier related to us.

Boko met with Raynaud on February 17, he said, because the French news weekly *Nouvel Observateur* on February 16 reported the essence of Boko's February 9 testimony (emphasizing the GOF's advice that Boko release the Belarusians and not get further involved). Boko told Raynaud he was very upset and angry that this information had been leaked to the press. He said she denied that she or her office had leaked the material, and that other parties involved in the case must have done so.

¶4. (C) We told Boko that a short item about his testimony to Raynaud and that named him had also appeared in the February 17 edition of *Le Figaro* (of which he had not been aware). Further upset, Boko said he was afraid that news of his testimony could put him and his family in danger, especially since he was already viewed as an enemy of the regime in Togo. He noted that there had already been a demonstration, consisting of regime supporters, in front of a house he owned in Lome. The UNDP representative in Togo had been leasing this house (a good source of income for Boko) but had recently departed Togo. The house was now vacant, and Boko was afraid it would be destroyed in retaliation for his testimony and for his February 4 meeting with the Paris diaspora (see para 10 below). (NOTE: One internet story refers to the possible destruction of the house -- www.togoforum.com/Ap/Press/Gazette/0216062.htm, and another comments on the trouble Boko faces as a result of public knowledge of his testimony -- www.togoforum.com/Ap/Press/Gazette/022206.htm . END NOTE.)

¶5. (C) In addition to his anger and fear, Boko expressed puzzlement over the leak. He was particularly vexed that he had now become a victim of the leak, as he had only tried to help the French by providing what he thought was useful and important information about the arms trafficking and bombing incident. Acknowledging that he was speculating, Boko said the story may have been given to the media by Raynaud (who

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Boko believed supported French presidential hopeful Nicolas Sarkozy) in order to discredit Sarkozy's political rival, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. Villepin served as Foreign Minister until March 31, 2004, and then as Interior Minister (including at the time of the November 6, 2004, bombing) and was therefore, in either position, likely to be at the center of any decision making in response to the information Boko was providing on the arms trafficking both before the bombing and especially concerning events at the time of and following the bombing. France's decision to do nothing about the Belarusians could harm Villepin politically, inasmuch as French soldiers had been killed, Boko surmised.

¶6. (SBU) NOTE: Along those lines, *Le Figaro's* February 17 article led to its publication on February 20 of a letter from a reader who commented that "one learns with stupefaction that the Belarusian pilots, having participated in Cote d'Ivoire in an attack on the French army (with nine deaths and a number of seriously wounded), were arrested, but that France did not deem it opportune to demand their extradition, apparently in order not to ruffle relations with M. Gbagbo." END NOTE.

WILLFUL NEGLECT TO KEEP IN GBAGBO'S GOOD GRACES?

¶7. (C) On the issue of why French authorities apparently did not act on the information Boko had provided before the bombing concerning the Togo-Cote d'Ivoire arms link and Montoya's involvement, and furthermore why France had failed to act when the Belarusians were in Togolese detention after the bombing, Boko speculated that France had early on decided to back Gbagbo's efforts to quash the northern rebels and restore order and unity to Cote d'Ivoire. France had turned a blind eye to the arms trafficking, so long as it helped Gbagbo. But, after the bombing and the deaths of the French soldiers, everything changed. France was put in the

difficult position of having supported someone who had killed French service members. France's current objective, Boko thought, was to avoid having this become a public scandal. Hence the request that he release the Belarusians and the lack of GOF effort to investigate the case. Judge Raynaud, however, was acting with the traditional autonomy of a French investigative judge, and her investigation was in part triggered by complaints from the families of the dead soldiers. Boko was ambivalent about Raynaud -- on the one hand, her investigation was bringing the truth to light, but on the other, she had done him a great disservice if she or her associates had leaked his testimony to the press or had negligently handled his statement so that others could commit the leak. (NOTE: Le Monde's February 23 edition reports that Raynaud on February 16 requested that an international arrest warrant be issued against Robert Montoya for "complicity in murder" concerning his role in supplying the aircraft and Belarusian military personnel involved in the bombing. The article also notes that Raynaud recently left her position as investigative judge and that the relatively inexperienced 32-year-old judge Florence Michon will now be handling the case. END NOTE.)

¶18. (C) In terms of retaliation, we noted that the Togo Embassy in Paris had recently circulated a diplomatic note announcing that the diplomatic passports of Boko and his family had been canceled. Boko said he was aware of this but said the "cancellation" was not valid. As former Interior Minister, he said he was familiar with how this worked -- according to Togo's laws and regulations, legitimately issued passports could only be canceled if they were physically canceled or destroyed by hand -- "they cannot be canceled through an announcement." He said these provisions, in theory, prohibited the GOT from arbitrarily canceling the passport of anyone it did not like. Boko said he would continue to use his diplomatic passport and would "see what happens" if it is challenged. (NOTE: Boko's diplomatic passport contains a five-year, multiple-entry U.S. visa issued in Paris in 2005. END NOTE.)

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK/MCC AND U.S. SUPPORT

¶19. (C) Boko said that current events caused him to think that he should consider leaving France. Ideally, he thought a job at an international organization would suit him both professionally and in terms of security for him and his family. He had mentioned earlier his interest in obtaining one of four open vice-presidential positions at the African Development Bank in Tunis. This had been a bit of a pipe dream, he said, until the press leaks caused him to re-evaluate his presence in France. He asked whether the U.S. could support his candidacy. Boko said he was also

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interested in consulting work regarding the Millennium Challenge Corporation. GUIDANCE REQUEST: Please advise as to what we can tell Boko regarding his interest in the African Development Bank position and Millennium Challenge Corporation. END GUIDANCE REQUEST.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, RELATIONS WITH GILCHRIST OLYMPIO

¶10. (C) Boko said that his February 4 meeting with the Togolese diaspora in Paris (Ref A) had gone well, with some 500 in attendance. He said the meeting featured an open discussion of Togo and its problems and how Togolese should unite in dealing with the Faure regime. Although pleased with the meeting, Boko said that this public foray into Togolese politics had increased his visibility and made him a potential target, all of which the leaked testimony made worse. He again noted the demonstration in front of his house in Lome and the possibility it would be destroyed.

¶11. (C) Boko said he was considering meeting with Gilchrist Olympio in an effort to bridge their differences. Boko said he had earlier refused to meet with Olympio, also in exile in

Paris, because Olympio had rejected Boko's proposal that they, along with other oppositionist personalities, meet jointly to discuss Togo's future.

FAURE FAMILY VALUES

¶12. (C) Boko said he was more convinced than ever that Faure intended to govern in the same manner as had his father. He became further convinced when a Togolese military friend told him recently that Faure was perpetuating one of his father's more gruesome practices. It seems that every year, during the night of January 12-13, Eyadema had a bull brought before him and his entourage, which he then shot and killed as part of a ritual to commemorate the 1963 coup and his personal killing of deposed President Sylvanus Olympio (Gilchrist's father) a day or two later. Boko was very disturbed to hear that this year, during the night of January 12-13, Faure had shot and killed a bull just as his father had for many years. Boko said he had earlier told his military friend that he hoped Faure would end this tradition, but the friend reported, to the friend's own dismay, that Faure had not.

¶13. (SBU) BIO NOTE: Boko announced that his second child, a healthy baby girl, was born on February 15. Her birth in the middle of these other complications made for a very busy period, Boko said. He noted with relief that as her mother is a French citizen and because of her birth in France, he would not have to try to obtain a Togolese passport for the newborn. Boko and his wife have one other child, a nine-year-old son.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

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